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SWISS NOTES ON SOUTH CAROLINA

BY GILBERT P. VOIGT

"On Tuesday last [February 1st] arrived——(Charlestown) Capt. Dunbarr from Rotterdam with above 200 Switzers out of the Canton of TOCKENBURGH [Toggenburg],¹ who are come to settle a Township on Savanna River called New Windsor, which was reserved for them upon a Petition to the Honorable the Governor and Council, granted some time since to one of their Commissioners Sebastasian Zouerbuhler, who was sent here by them to look out for and pitch upon Land which he should think most convenient for planting of hemp and Flax, and which, 't is hoped in time will be of no small Advantage to this Province."

So reads an item in the *Gazette* for January 29–February 5, 1737. This party of German-Swiss settlers had left their mountainous fatherland "in the beginning of August last" [1736] and had journeyed to Rotterdam, where they arrived "in September following" and "where they met with great hardships and a long detention from the Magistrates" of that city, the latter "pretending to oblige them to embark in a Dutch vessell when the said familys had already contracted for their passage to Carolina in an English Vessel which occasioned a demorage of Six weeks and an expence of

¹ The Toggenburg is a portion of the present Canton of St. Gall. In the *Saltzburger Nachrichten* (vol. 3, p. 1044), Halle, 1740, these settlers are called "Switzers from the Canton of Appenzell." Cf. the "Petition" of Sebastian Zouerbuhler quoted below.

several hundreds of pounds".² This delay had entailed a "Great Loss and Detriment" to these "familys" as well as to Sebastian Zouberbuhler and "his Friends".³ The British "Minister at the Hague" had interceded for them with the result that they had "obtained leave to embark in the said English vessel." This they had done in November 1736 and had "sailed directly for Carolina."

In Sebastian Zouberbuhler's account of the migration of these Switzers, no mention is made of his having been sent to South Carolina by them for the purpose of selecting and securing a tract, or tracts, of land, as is stated in the Gazette.⁴ It was "the Encouragements given to Colonel Purry for the settling a Township upon the River Savanna" that led him to come to the Province in the year 1734 "at his own cost and charge—in hopes of meeting with the same encouragements in proposing to People another Township." He further states that "during his stay in South Carolina he travell'd all over the Country to take a view of the Lands," on which His Majesty had "Ordered the Townships to be laid out, and after several conferences held with the Council at Charles Town he . . . concluded a Contract with them signed the 17th July 1736 for settling a Township up the River Savanna on a Place formerly an Indian Village, then called Savanna Town (at present New Windsor) and for bringing over one hundred Protestant Familys in the space of one Year wth a farther promise to bring over two hundred Familys more after the first hundred be well settled and able to subsist themselves."⁵—"In pursuance of the said Contract" he writ to his friends at Appenzel to come away with as many familys as could be got ready accordingly they set out with about fifty Familys consisting of one hun-

² "The Humble Petition of Sebastian Zouberbuhler of the Canton of Appenzel in Swiszerland." (Transcripts in the Office of the Historical Commission, vol. 18, p. 176 ff.)

³ See page 95.

⁴ He first proposed in 1735 to bring over 100 Protestant Swiss families and asked for Provisions, Cattle, Tools and free Warrants Plots and Grants. After having "spent some time in viewing several Places in consequence of this Petition and having been taken ill he found it impossible for him to transport to Carolina the said 100 Familys in the time he at first Proposed." (Transcripts, vol. XVIII, p. 267 ff.)

⁵ He does state that "they are chiefly qualified for cultivating hamp and Flax, and the Lands of the said Township" are "very fitt for that purpose."

dred and ninety two Persons (most able body'd young people and not above twenty children among them) Upon their arrival in Charles Town, the party encountered another hindrance and delay, so that it was not until that April they began the journey to New Windsor. "After a great deal of Trouble," writes the Rev. Bartholomew Zouberbuhler from "Charlestown in South Carolina" April 9th, 1737, "to his Son Sebastian Zouberbuhler at London,"⁶ "The Government of South Carolina Resolved on the 2d of April to assist the People with three Pettiagos for Transporting them and their Baggage hence to New Windsor. But that in case they wanted more The People should provide them at their own Charges. Whereupon the People who absolutely refused to be at the Charge of a Sufficient Number of Pettiagoes and Boats, came to me and told me that as I had promised them that they should be carried to the Place free of all Charges, so they desired that I might provide them with a sufficient Number of Pettiagoes and Boats. Thus I found myself obliged to hire One Pettiagoe, over and above those provided by the Government, for which I am to pay One Pistole per diem; as also Two Trading Boats to carry them and their Baggage from Purrysburgh up the River to New Windsor for the Pettiagoes cannot go higher than Purrysburgh. All which Expences fall upon my Account. And therefore you must see to find Ways and Means for discharging the said Expences." The journey from Charles Town to Purrysburg lasted "four full Weeks," while the remaining distance from the latter point to New Windsor required "Seventeen days more."⁷ On the evening of the seventh of May, some of the party⁸ arrived at Ebenezer, Ga., where they spent the night with the Saltzburghers, while almost a month later, June 4th, another boatload touched at this place.⁹

⁶ This is a "translation of Part of a Letter written in High German by the Rev'd Mr. Bartholomew Zouberbuhler, etc." Transcripts, vol. 18, pp. 232-33.

⁷ "Translation of Part of a Letter written by the same hand, at Charlestown ye 4 December 1737." *Ibid.*

⁸ "Yesterday evening (i.e. May 7th) a large boatful of Switzers from the Canton of Appenzell arrived at our settlement and spent the night here." *Saltzburger Nachrichten*. Part 1, p. 1044.

⁹ "Yesterday evening (i.e. June 4th) during our prayer-meeting, there arrived here from Purrysburg a boatful of Switzers, who likewise are journeying to their place near Savanna Town." *Ibid.*, p. 1060.

The emigration of these settlers of New Windsor is mentioned at some length in the "*21stes Neujahrsblatt der Zuerchersichen Huelfsgesellschaft*," 1821.

"Enticed by these descriptions,¹⁰ the number of emigrants soon increased. The town of Savannah (Savanna Town?) was populated chiefly by Switzers, and later (sic!) Newbern, North Carolina, was likewise settled by our fellow-countrymen. It was observed that at that time several hundred families passed through the pass near Wallenburg into the Canton of Basel alone. One of the largest crowds, consisting of inhabitants of eastern Switzerland, set out under the leadership of Governor Tobler, who had been dismissed from his position during the disturbances that took place in Appenzell at that time, and of a St. Gall preacher by the name of Zuberbuhler.¹¹ According to the reports of the latter, they had landed happily in Charlestown after a voyage of seven weeks. During the journey they had lost only two children out of two hundred and fifty persons. They had found enough fertile land and had been accorded a friendly reception everywhere. They had every reason to be sure of their future prosperity, provided that they should be industrious and orderly. He added that, in view of these facts, his son would return to St. Gall shortly and would bring fifty to sixty families more. The ordinances of the government prevented this; nevertheless Tobler and Zouberbuhler kept in touch with their fatherland for yet a

¹⁰ "An exceedingly favorable description of those districts and of the advantages of the settlements there (i.e. "South Carolina and Georgia"), with an appended map, by a native of Basel who was living there." "A considerable edition" of this work, which "appeared" in 1711, "had been quickly sold." 2) A publication prepared by Col. John Pierre Purry, which is mentioned as follows: "When toward the end of the year 1733, Purry made a journey to Switzerland, he brought with him several letters by different emigrants, who all testified as to their great satisfaction with their new fatherland. He himself, too, published some reports about Carolina. These, along with the afore-mentioned letters, were translated into German, under the title . . . , printed, and scattered everywhere."

¹¹ "There is a man among them (i.e. the settlers of New Windsor, who spent the night of May 7th at Ebenezer), whom they call Governor. He is said to be very clever and of high repute by them. To some of the Saltzburger he spoke in very high terms of the district, to which they are journeying and which he himself has already seen. . . ." (*Saltzburger Nachrichten*, Part 1, p. 1044.)

long while, and the former, who was not unlearned in surveying and astronomy, dedicated to the states of Glarus, Appenzell and the three confederacies an almanac¹² for the year 1754, which contained a description of South Carolina and on whose title page he designated himself Justice of the Peace of Granville County. Meanwhile, not all of his former fellow-travelers (i.e. emigrants) had been in like measure satisfied with their lot. Several returned to Europe in a wretched state, and one of these, Wernhard Trachsler of Elgg published a short account of his journey, in which he complained bitterly of the hardships of the journey, the unfriendliness of the climate and of the inhabitants, poor food and dwellings, diseases, wild people and wild animals, and dissuaded everyone from journeying thither. There also appeared with this report a lament of those who had remained behind in Carolina, which contained among other stanzas the following one: [Note. A prose translation is given.]

"I journeyed from a free land, in which I lived honestly and honorably. I did not know of Carolina, where I am now a slave. I have no freedom at all. Great God, grant me Thy grace!"

Hans Wernhard Trachsler's "short account of his journey," which has been mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, bore the following title: "Brief Description of a Journey to the Province of Carolina, situated in the West Indies, together with a Report of the Character, Nature, and Features of this Land by a Citizen who Recently Returned to his own Country." It was published in 1738 at Zurich and was "printed in Burckli's Printery." A translation which follows is complete save for a few words that are unintelligible in the written copy from which it was made.

"Hans Wernhard Trachsler of Elgg, district of Zurich, formerly soldier in Imperial and Royal French service, had the desire to see Carolina and undertook to do it. Accordingly on the ninth of September, 1736 he took leave of his wife and children at Elgg and with eighty five gulden¹³ cash journeyed to Holland alone. From Basel to Rotterdam it costs a person over twelve years of age eight gulden; from four to twelve years four gulden, boat passage alone, without food and drink, besides baggage six gulden

¹² Bibliographies of Tobler's almanacs prepared by Miss Webber and Mr. A. S. Salley, Jr., have appeared in previous numbers of this magazine.

¹³ "Till 1876 a gulden of 1s 8d was the unit in the South German States."

per hundred weight. In Rotterdam he met many persons who also intended to travel thither, from various places, especially Switzers from Appenzell, Pundten? (Graubuenden?) and Rheintal; among whom were Mr. Zuebli¹⁴ of St. Gall, Pastor Zuberbuehler of Troguen, Governor Tobler of Herisau, and others. These men and all the rest present, making a company of 250 persons, entered into an agreement with the captain of a vessel before the voyage to the afore-mentioned province of Carolina. He undertook to carry them, and made them pay him for freight, care, and food, for a grown person five louis d'ors; for a person from three to twelve years old, two and a half louis d'ors; and for children under three, nothing. During this time there was apportioned to them, in messes of five persons, every twenty-four hours on Sundays and Tuesdays, dried beef, On Saturdays, pork; on Fridays, cod-

¹⁴ In a letter of the Salzburger pastors, Boltzius and Gronau, dated July 29, 1737, mention is made of Mr. Zueblin, who had "recently brought" them "the letters and the gift," and who had been sick in Purrysburg "almost as long as he" had been "in the land." From the diary of these pastors we learn that Mr. Zueblin of Purrysburg had two brothers who had desired to be taken in at Ebenezer. The date of this item is Dec. 19, 1737. The entry for Feb. 25, 1736 contains the information that two brothers named "Ziebely" had been supplied with provisions "from the store-house in Savannah" at the request of the pastors, when "some time ago" they had been "in very great want of" these and had been "forsaken by everybody." Their parents in St. Gall were said to be "wealthy people," and they wished to "pay back everything with joy in due time." "Both brothers fear God," we are told, "and make use of our (the Saltzburger pastors') ministry, as often as we come to Purrysburg." From the entry of November 8, 1742, we learn that Mr. David Zuebli had a son in Switzerland, who was studying theology. . . . "The father should have liked to have had him become the German preacher in Purrysburg; but because the number of the German people is becoming continually smaller and he himself no longer has a great desire to remain there, therefore he desires that the German people in Savannah might call him to be their preacher." We are further informed (February 8, 1743) that "Mr. Zuebli from Purrysburg" had written to one of the pastors "that he wished to keep the most of his negroes only a few days longer and to release himself from this burden (or charge) and to change his manner of life according to God's apparent direction." Again (February 8, 1743) we are told that "Mr. Zuebli" had "bought, on his arrival in the land, a plantation of two hundred acres on the Savannah River, but" that he had "long ago been forced by the frequent flooding, which now for two years had continued longer than formerly, to abandon it and" had "rented another in the interior that" was "very remote (isolated)." [These items are taken from the *Salzburger Nachrichten*.]

fish; on other days, boiled rice, peas, and barley together with a quart of water and beer and a piece of zwieback per head. Children under three, as they paid no passage, were counted to their parents. But this supply of food was not sufficient for them, they being people not accustomed to voyages, so that every one had to try at times to buy something from the ship-steward out of his own pocket. Moreover, they had to lie on the hard floor without any beds, and the sea caused them many sick days and fever. After twelve weeks and three days they finally arrived in Carolina, and they disembarked in the chief city, Charleston, situated in South Carolina, and were lodged in two shacks. There they caused a petition to be presented to the English Council and the Governor that they, like those who had arrived before them, might receive the provision and support for the first year, as was promised to the aforementioned Pastor Zuberbuehler's son in Carolina and even in London; but they were refused and silenced, inasmuch as His Royal Majesty of England has issued an order not to advance or give anything more to anybody.¹⁵ Hereupon they found themselves in the most extreme poverty; they had to eat themselves, as it were; home and hope they had none; work they did not find. They scattered here and there. Some remained in Charlestown; others went to Purrysburg and Orangeburg, Congaree, Savannah (Savannah Town, i. e. New Windsor?) and other places, where they were assigned to woodland and raw fields; others, and especially the women who had lost their husbands on the voyage, begged.¹⁶ Trachsler, for his part, found some credit

¹⁵ The Minutes of Council for February 4, 1737/8 contain the reply of the Council to a message from the House, in which reply we find the following words: " . . . the late Lieut^t. Governor by the advice of His Majesty's Council, with proper prudence and Caution near a Year Agoe Caused an Advertizement to be Published and Continued in the *Weekly Gazette* giving Notice of the Expiration of that Law (i.e., the Appropriation Law) and of the Insufficiency of the Fund to provide for the poor Protestants then Arrived"

¹⁶ On February 3, 1737/8 a message was sent by the House to the Council in which we find the following reference to the plight of some newly arrived immigrants: " Especially as we have Such frequent Complaints that for want of some Provision being made for these people (Irish Protestants) and the Other Poor Protestants lately arrived in this Province, this Town is filled with people begging from Door to Door in So much that Unless they are Some way forthwith provided for they will become a perfect

and began to butcher, and rented in Charlestown a shed or shanty made of boards for 20 Batzen of our money per week. Some time afterwards, when Spain made some moves looking to an invasion of the country and on this account the fortresses were occupied, he received from the said Council in Charlestown the favor to be placed in the fortress of Port Royal, which lies in the direction of Georgia, as sergeant with fifty men from the best people under the command of a lieutenant from Prussia. Here they had enough to eat, but after four months were paid off and discharged. Then he went to Orangeburg and tried to support himself again with butchering and soap-boiling, which he had learned years before in France. He also entered into an agreement with a captain, to whom he offered to teach soap-boiling, for four years for a half of the profits. But he was unable from the very beginning to come to any accounting with the gentleman. Therefore he applied to the magistrate and there had himself released from the contract. As he now had some money on hand, he again hired passage with it on a ship and sailed back to Holland, taking with him the wife of a smith in Troguen. Only a few days ago he returned to his children in Elgg.

All persons who get to Rotterdam will be transported to this province. Such as are provided with money can engage passage themselves on the ships, which sail at intervals. But such as are not in a condition to do this will be taken charge of and sent over by the Messrs. Hoppen,¹⁷ prominent merchants there, (a few unintelligible words) in the manner described above, except that those who live only by grace fare even somewhat worse in the treatment over the sea and in this province. To those who pay the ship-passage out of their own money, immediately a portion of land, thirty acres¹⁸ to the head, is apportioned, but without

Nusance to the Present Inhabitant of the Town." Relief and action was urged. The Council replied on the following day (cf. note on preceding page) and recommended that the "poor Protestants" "Enter into Service without more loss of time."

¹⁷ In a pamphlet entitled "Umstaendliche Nachricht vor diejenigen, welche auf eine sichere Weise nach S. C. America, ziehen wollen," Speyer, 1741, there is a copy of a contract drawn up between some emigrants to South Carolina and the firm of "Archibald Isaac Zachariah Hope, Merchants in Rotterdam." The date of this contract is April 5, 1741.

¹⁸ This should be fifty instead of thirty acres.

house, barn, victuals nor implements for the cultivation of this land: but they are simply assigned to the apportioned piece of land thus bare of all things. It is true that in the beginning the provision in victuals and other things was advanced to the Europeans who arrived in this land for the first year; but in the year 1736 His Majesty of England issued a manifest that no advance should any more be given to any stranger. But the others, who are taken charge of by the aforementioned Messrs. Hoppen in Rotterdam, are sold to the farmers settled there for four years. They serve for food and clothing, but must do such work as is too severe for them in this hot country and uses the most of them up. This South Carolina is a very hot country. Already in March the heat is as great as in the middle of the summer in Switzerland. In December there is sometimes wet and cold weather, but not enough to freeze at this time. But especially in the approaching spring, often so sharp a wind blows that one needs the best clothing if one wishes to work outdoors. Around the towns and along the two rivers the land is very fertile, so that anything can be planted in the gardens; but there are no grape-vines. Every acre around there is worth 200 gulden.

But the land which is distant from the rivers and which is distributed to the new-comers, is hot beyond all measure, and if one wishes to plant anything at all on it, especially in the beginning when it must be cleared, it requires strong hand-work. This land is full of wild men who live in the woods stark naked, but who do no harm to other people. They do nothing but shoot wild animals, bears, wolves and deer and bring their skins and pelts to the towns to sell them and exchange them for victuals. Besides, there are very many negroes who have been sold thither as slaves. These people are worth a high price, because they are much more able to do the work and much cheaper to keep in food and drink than the Europeans. As to divine service, there are neither ministers nor churches anywhere except in the chief city Charlestown, where there is a French Church.¹⁹ Neither does one find Bibles or other books for sale. In Orangeburg, a

¹⁹ I am indebted to Mr. A. S. Salley, Jr., for the information that at this time there were six churches in Charlestown alone.

goldsmith, Gietzendanner of Liechtenstaeg,²⁰ has lately set up as a pastor and preached every Sunday in an open place near to his own cottage. Children as old as nine years were brought to him for the administration of baptism, and people came a distance of forty English miles (one of which makes half an hour) to his preaching. On account of the vehement heat and the bad food and drink, everybody who comes to this country must endure severe diseases, especially fevers, from which the most die. One sees no money consisting of silver and gold, but only paper, on which the English coat of arms and the value are printed. There are notes of four, two and one louisd'ors, an English pound containing ten batzen of our money, and so on down to a half crown, which is equal to ten kreutzer. If anyone is fortunate enough to obtain a loan, he must pay ten per cent interest per year to Englishmen for it, and fifteen per cent to the Jews, who have also invaded this country. In the government as in all other matters there is not the least order. Everybody can trade, work and undertake whatever he wishes to. But crimes, especially theft, are severely punished. Everything produced by handiwork brings a high price; clothing and agricultural implements can scarcely be had. Tools necessary for work and cultivating the ground are worth very much: a saw is sold for nine English pounds, a shovel or a hoe for thirty batzen, an axe for twenty batzen, a hand-mill for nine pennies, and so forth. This country, like other countries, is subject to blessed as well as unfruitful years; but all provisions are always dear. A hundred weight of rice is worth four to five Carolina pounds, a loaf of bread half a pound, a pound of lean beef a batzen (altogether the cattle in this country is small, and the largest ox will weigh not more than four and a half hundred weight; it is not stall-fed, but roams wild in the woods), a pound of tallow ten kreutzer; one pound of sea-fish ten kreutzer, and so

²⁰ In the *Gazette* for March 5-12 and 19-26, 1737 appeared the following advertisement:

"Jno. Ulrich Giessendaner Silversmith gives Notice, that he makes & mends all sorts of small work, designs and engraves Seals, Coats of Arms &c. in Gold, Silver, Copper or Pewter. He lives on the Green by the Church in the House of Mrs. Hammerton. He likewise sells a Balsamus Aromaticus good for the head and tooth-ache and other Infirmities, also an excellent and comfortable Balsam of Mace."

forth. On account of the great heat, there is no fruit, figs and the like. The drink consists of bad water or in a mixture of brandy, sugar, lemon and water, which is called punch there and is dear. A quart is sold for twenty kreutzer. But it is quite unhealthful and unadapted to the nature of Europeans. Wine from Spain is also brought into the country, but on account of the high price only the rich can afford it. Only in and around the towns are houses to be found, but in the country only shacks or shanties made of boards and covered with brush, in which the people stay. All that these are able to plant on the land given to them, and that too with the most laborious work, consists of Indian corn, of which they make cakes, bake them at the fire and so nourish themselves. But the poor get nothing all the year round for their sustenance but potatoes, which they dig out of the ground themselves. With these alone they have to keep themselves alive, and they see neither bread, meat, nor anything else.

This province of South Carolina, here described, is four hundred miles distant from Pennsylvania. But there, according to reports, life is much more miserable and toilsome. This deponent, Hans Wernhard Trachsler, met some of the people who disembarked there, who were in extreme poverty and could not sufficiently lament their misery, so that one even broke out into this lamentation: 'It is better to die upon the ocean than to come into West India and perish there.' For not a few die from misery and sorrow upon the almost endless open sea and find a grave in the wild waves of the desolate ocean. Therefore one cannot sufficiently thank God when he gets back healthy into his dear fatherland and into his old home, especially as it is very difficult to get free and away again; for it must be known that if one wishes to leave the country again, he must first give notice at the state chancellory in Carolina and have his name called out for three weeks and three days in order that if anybody has any claims against him, he may report and make everything right before his departure. But the principal thing is that they are not willing to let people out, because the more populous the country is, the safer they feel; among other things also on account of the pests, like snakes and crocodiles, of which there is a multitude. Finally, one of the chief hindrances to getting away is the overwhelming costs which are demanded of those who return. For instance, the deponent and Anna Maria

Hugendobler, with three children, had to give 162 gulden for passage as far as London, Gabriel Schaeffer, however, had to pay 125 gulden for himself alone, because they had to give him more serviceable food; although the journey is also long and one reckons from Carolina to Rotterdam alone 2200 hours on the water, in which there is many a bitterly sad moment, to which the person mentioned at the outset will testify from his own experience to the end of his days."